GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:678
ANSWERED ON:02.12.2015
Regulation of Content over Internet
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Cyber Regulation Advisory Committee has recently been assigned the task of preparing a list of pornographic websites and blocking them;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the said task has been assigned to a private company instead of any government agency and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the measures taken by the Government to increase capacity and enhance technical expertise of government agencies in order to monitor and block such sites?

Answer

(a) to (c): In a Writ Petition in the matter of Kamlesh Vaswani vs. Union of India, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order dated 29.8.2014 directed that it would be appropriate if the Government places the copy of the writ petition and interlocutory applications before the Cyber Regulation Advisory Committee (CRAC), which has members from all sections of the Society including Government, Industry, Civil Society and Academy, for its consideration. Accordingly, the CRAC meeting was held on 5th September 2014 to discuss issues relating to availability of pornography material on the Internet and filtering of the same by the service providers in the country. CRAC requested Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), an association of members from content providers to lead the effort as part of Social responsibility, to collect and maintain the repository of blacklisted pornography sites from various sources including list of child pornography sites maintained by other countries. With a view to get a list of objectionable sites, CRAC recommended IAMAI to enable government to initiate further appropriate action on such sites. Similar approach is adopted by other countries like Australia, United Kingdom and Unites States of America, where the Governments are working with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to deal with the issue of pornography.

In order to effectively deal with Online Child Pornographic contents, Government has already initiated steps towards devising a mechanism to securely access INTERPOL's "Worst-of-List" through Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is the National Nodal Point for INTERPOL related activities in the country, and disable access to such content on the web with the involvement and co-operation of all stakeholders concerned in the country.

(d): The filtering of web sites with obscene / objectionable content poses significant technical challenge. These websites keep on changing the names, domain addresses and hosting platforms from time to time making it difficult to filter or block such websites using technical tools available in the market. Further "https" websites with encrypted contents are used to transmit the pornographic content which makes filtering difficult as the data is encrypted. Therefore, the tools provide filtering to a limited extent only. The tools, in the process may also filter genuine content and degrade the performance of systems.

To address the issues effectively, Government is in regular touch with Internet Service Providers to upgrade their infrastructure and technology to effectively address the shortcomings with regard to identifying and blocking encrypted websites / URLs. Further, Social Networking sites are monitored by the security agencies in order to check / remove objectionable contents from the web sites in consultation with Indian Computer Emergency Team (CERT-In) in accordance with the provisions of Information Technology Act, 2000. Government is in regular touch with Social Networking sites, having their offices in India, to disable objectionable contents at the source from their websites. Government has also initiated Research and Development programmes to deal with technical issues relating to encrypted communications from the point of monitoring and blocking.

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